

Marine Moves in South Linked to Cuban Crisis

High Official Sees Situation 'Tense, Tight'

Large-scale movements of United States Marines were reported yesterday in the Florida Keys and at Marine bases in the South. The movements were believed to be in connection with the Cuban situation.

Reports of the movements coincided with reports of high-level meetings here among Administration officials. High official sources were unusually secretive when asked to comment, but one conceded that the situation was "tense and tight."

The Defense Department denied that the troop movements were related to Cuba. Its spokesmen said military equipment and troops that were unloaded at Key West on Friday were taking part in "Philbriglex," an exercise being conducted between the Keys and Puerto Rico.

The Defense Department said about 40 ships, 20,000 men and a number of carrier-based planes are taking part in the exercise, scheduled to last until Oct. 30.

Unusual Alert Denied

The Pentagon added it had received numerous queries from across the Nation about reported troop movements. It said all maneuvers were part of routine training and denied that any unusual alert had been issued.

From California, the Ocean-side Blade-Tribune told The Washington Post that 2500 Marines had been recalled to Camp Pendleton, reportedly for immediate transfer to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The Blade-Tribune said it heard that the men had been alerted for duty in the Caribbean.

In Washington, the rumors of a crisis over the Cuban situation were fed by President Kennedy's abrupt return here yesterday, and the cancellation by Secretary of State Dean Rusk of a planned trip to the Business Council meeting in Hot Springs, Va., on Friday.

Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Army, Navy and Air Force Secretaries to remain in Washington for the next six weeks for daily consultation.

At the State Department, only the seven-member Executive

offices and in the Inter-American Affairs and Alliance for Progress offices.

Several members of the Central Intelligence Agency were known to have come into the State Department building last night.

Reports of troop movements yesterday included a brief alert at Jacksonville, Fla., Air Force Base. But a military spokesman called it a "local training alert" and said it ended at noon.

A buildup of air defenses in the Southeastern United States was reported Thursday in a Los Angeles Times news dispatch from Washington. A sizable number of Air Force F-100 Supersaber jet fighters was reported assigned to Homestead Air Force Base, 30 miles south of Miami, and a squadron of 14 Navy F-4E Phantom jets at Key West.

Earlier yesterday the Herald reported details of the Marine buildup in Key West. The Herald said that tons of heavily shrouded military equipment were unloaded from a 10,000-ton Navy vessel which steamed into the harbor Friday.

Convoys of trucks, some pulling trailers and all driven by Marines, moved from the dock area along Roosevelt Blvd. headed

for Boca Chica Naval Air Station four miles north.

The sudden appearance of the Marines and their equipment sparked wide speculation as to their ultimate objective in this Cuba-conscious city just 90 miles from Havana.

But the Marines, the Defense Department's spokesman said, are support personnel for aviation units engaged in the training maneuvers.

Not only by sea and land was the Boca Chica installation strengthened, according to observers. Those along the overseas highway which passes the base said 40 to 45 C-47 cargo planes touched down on the runways there Friday, and there has been a notable increase in the number of fighter planes on the aprons of the airport.

The already-begun military maneuvers in the Caribbean, to which the Defense Department referred, are headquartered at the Marine base on Vieques Island off Puerto Rico. This is the sixth consecutive year in which the training has been held, Washington officials said, and the present schedule calls for another week of exercises.

Approved For Release 2004/03/31 : CIA-RDP64B00346R000200140002-7